

**DRAFT Virginia's State Special Education Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 17 & 18, 2002**

Attendance – October 17, 2002

Committee Members:

Stan Boren
Charlene Christopher
Emily Dreyfus
Anne Fischer
Heidi Lawyer
Shirley Ricks
Carmen Sanchez
Leslie Snyder
Kevin Sutherland
Karen Tompkins
Elizabeth Vincel
Michael Wong
David Martin

Department of Education Staff

Pat Abrams
Pat Burgess
Judy Hudgins
Sandra Ruffin
Doug Cox

Guests:

John McLaughlin
Carol David
Jeff Schuyler
Charles Swadley
Heike Mothershed

Attendance – October 18, 2002

Committee Members:

Kevin Sutherland
Mike Wong
Stan Boren
Leslie Snyder
Carman Sanchez
Charlene Christopher
Emily Dreyfus
Shirley Ricks
David Martin
Elizabeth Vincel

Department of Education Staff

Pat Abrams
Judy Hudgins

October 17

Old Business

Approval of Minutes – The July meeting minutes were approved October 1, 2002 by email.

Reports

Assistant Superintendent –

The committee was asked to comment on the proposed Board of Education guidelines for an alternative SOL assessment and evaluation program for certain students with disabilities who cannot be accommodated on the SOL tests.

Mr. Swadley, guest, asked the committee to address statewide guidelines for local public school divisions' use of physical restraint and seclusion, including training of school staff. Charlene appointed an ad hoc subcommittee to address policy, guidelines, and training on this topic and bring recommendations to the full committee at the January 2003 SSEAC meeting. (Subcommittee members are David, Kevin, Heidi, Shirley, Stan, and Karen. Mr. Swadley offered to assist. Irene Walker-Bolton will serve as the VDOE staff liaison to support the work of the subcommittee.

Chair –

Charlene presented the SSEAC 2002 Annual Report to the Board of Education at their September 2002 meeting. The report was accepted with no discussion.

The Board approved a revision of their accountability policy for students with disabilities, which was released in Superintendents' Memo on October 11.

Charlene was impressed with the state Board's Student Advisory Committee.

Charlene recommends the committee address topics for the January 2003 meeting that include implications for special education from the new No Child Left Behind Act requirements and Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) updates through the subcommittees.

Constituencies -

Leslie Snyder– Person with a disability representative – As a special education teacher, she is finding that her students with average intelligence and reading difficulties had made little progress over the years even though they had been identified at a young age. They are passing SOL tests that are read to them as an accommodation, but she is concerned that those students are leaving school still not knowing how to read.

Anne Fischer - Region 2 parent representative – She made contact with all chairs in her region and brought the following summary of issues.

- Accessing general curriculum of students in self contained classes,
- Remediation not offered for child not passing,
- Elimination of TMR acronym,
- Bus scheduling affecting school day parameters,
- Would like SSEAC to keep parents abreast of issues with No Child Left Behind Act requirements.

Elizabeth Vincel - Region 6 parent representative - She has maintained contact with LACs but did not hear of issues to bring to the SSEAC, at this time.

Emily Dreyfus – Region 5 parent representative - She recommended a new book, *Choosing Naia*, for parents who are expecting a child with Downs Syndrome.

Carmen Sanchez – Region 4 parent representative – Carmen reported issues from her region of not continuing reading instruction for students beyond elementary level. She requested that the VDOE staff (Judy Hudgins) provide the list of LAC chairpersons/contacts quickly, so that the regional parent representatives can initiate contact with them.

Linda McKelvy-Chic – Parent Education Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) liaison to the committee provided a handout updating their activities across the state. Conferences and public awareness were the focus of the activities funded by the state improvement grant.

Charlene Christopher – Teacher representative – She reported that the National Education Association (NEA) is recommending the following for IDEA reauthorization: quality professional development at preservice and inservice levels; full federal funding; relief from paperwork; standard IEP form; behavior & discipline; consistent identification criteria; increase vocational technical emphasis; early intervention; reduction of class size & caseload.

Presentations

Monitoring of Special Education in Nursing Homes – Sandra Ruffin provided information on the monitoring of students' special education in nursing homes and other long-stay acute care facilities. It was reported that education services are provided through a variety of means. The focus for monitoring of services was discussed. The facilities fall within the jurisdiction of monitoring local public school divisions who have children living in these facilities for medical (noneducational) reasons. As part of the monitoring protocol, the public school division is prompted with questions about service provision and the student records are reviewed. Also, the three facilities with the most number of students are visited, which are: St Mary's in Norfolk, Lake Taylor Hospital in Norfolk, and Iliff Renaissance Pediatric Unit in Dunn Loring.

Action: A motion proposed by Heidi and seconded by Carmen was passed to advise the VDOE, in the reassessment of monitoring of Iliff, as part of Fairfax County Public Schools monitoring, to conduct a site visit in which the children are seen and some of the parents of the children are interviewed.

Local Improvement Plan Evaluation Project -

The VDOE is evaluating the policy of Local Improvement Plan (LIP) process, which is linked to implementing Virginia's Special Education Improvement Plan's strategic directions and goals. The consultants (Dr. Carol David and Jeff Schuyler) provided a summary of the areas that have been addressed by localities. The information suggests that over 80% of the localities have met or exceeded their objectives from their intervention activities, and approximately 20% either have not met their objectives or have insufficient data. The design of the evaluation project was provided. The SSEAC along with other stakeholders, are being informed of the process, asked for feedback, and will be asked to help interpret the data that will be collected. The project is scheduled for completion by Fall 2003.

Public Comment

Charlene reviewed the policy for public comment.

Heike Mothershed, parent from Stafford presented concerns with her 16 year old daughter's special education program for students with mental retardation. The concerns include lack of: access to the academic curriculum for social studies and science, books, guidelines on what and how to teach, class outline, and the practice of grouping students by disability label.

Mary Wilt, parent from Virginia Beach presented written comment praising her child's school division for making some progress in getting self-contained special education teachers strategies to improve instruction in the Standards of Learning (SOL). However, she raised concerns that there is widespread practice of segregating students with disabilities in self-contained classes, which results in practices that limit these students' access to the general curriculum and reading programs.

Old Business, continued

Parent Information Update - Judy Hudgins provided an update on parent involvement projects. The draft LAC guidelines are being developed by a consultant. The LAC contact list will be forwarded to the committee. Judy requested SSEAC parent representatives to report to her any change in the LAC contact as the list is based on submission from school divisions last spring.

Scanning Process & Training

Lissa Power-deFur and John McLaughlin provided the committee with information and training for using a “futures scanning process”. The purposes of the presentation are to:

1. familiarize with scanning and enlist committee members’ participation in periodic scanning; and
2. provide overview of the scanning process and basic tools for committee members to use around key issues that are emerging as a process to inform and engage.

Underlying the scanning process is the philosophy that it is our moral responsibility to use data/information to shape the future. Population trends and disproportionality of race/ethnicity were two areas used as examples to illustrate how the process works. The tools used were the 9-Box (probability and impact dimensions), the Trend Line (Future History) chart, and the Futures Wheel. The 9-Box precipitates various perspectives and discussion about an issue. The Trend Line (Future History) is used to analyze past and present impact of an action or demographic and predict its impact in the future. The third tool, the Futures Wheel, helps to look at scanning findings to prioritize actions. The committee members practiced using the tools to develop a list of actions to address the demographics suggesting a present and future personnel shortage. The examples of actions that could help the future are:

- Better supervision/mentoring of new teachers.
- Higher pay for teachers.
- Higher societal values of education
- Links to teacher contract and continued training
- Tax incentives for teachers
- Tuition assistance for high school students to go into teaching
- Local teacher retention programs.

The SSEAC members will be periodically receiving scanning questions for their response so that the scanning feedback can be used by the state improvement plan management team to assist in developing and prioritizing actions for improvement. The “InfoByte” fact sheet will also be sent periodically to SSEAC members as part of this process.

Personnel Shortage Update - Pat Burgess provided an update on a few new special education teacher recruitment state initiatives. Through the state improvement plan, local education agencies were supported in a statewide subscription for the special education recruitment service, Teachers-to-Teachers.Com, a web based teacher recruitment system. Another recruitment activity includes a toll-free service accessing special education teacher preparation programs in Virginia.

SSEAC Discussion/Feedback on the Board of Education’s Policy for Alternative SOL Assessment & Evaluation Process – Committee members provided feedback on the proposed Board of Education policy by section. This discussion included:

Title:

- The term “Alternative” is too close to “Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP)” and should be changed. Consider adding this proposed process to the “Substitute” tests, which are addressed in the Standards of Accreditation.

General Eligibility:

- Eligibility is not narrow enough; it will open the door to a lot of students and their teachers & parents requesting this alternative.
- Strengthen the description of how limited the access to the alternative assessment will be. Clarify and specify the parameters, including defining the time period for “onset” of disability, and a more specific definition of “uniqueness” of the student’s disability. The proposed description is too ambiguous for IEP and 504 teams or the state review panel.

Review Panel:

- Recommend that the panel consist of one set of individuals, rather than changing for each case, to assure consistency. Identify people with the content expertise areas to be available for the panel, and use the same ones for different cases.

Procedures:

- The state policy needs to define the parameters more specifically for the teams to use. (i.e., The VAAP participation criteria is clearer than this.).
- Questions were raised on operational aspects, such as: How much time before the test should the student’s team submit the request?
- People needing to implement need to think through this before a broad policy is disseminated.
- Instead of having “utilized” accommodations, it should be that all accommodations have been considered with justification for rejecting.
- Concerns on implementation need to be addressed before a policy is forwarded.
- There should be more clearly defined what constitutes “demonstration of mastery.”

General Issues/Reactions to the Proposed Policy:

There are different uses of SOL test and the results. The committee members see the need for exceptions to show that the students have been taught, and learned, the content. However, the committee members struggled to process the implications of the proposed policy because of the prediction that this policy would open the door so wide, it would make the SOL tests more meaningless. It would develop another level of “alternate assessment” for students working toward Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard diplomas. There was consensus from committee members that the policy must more clearly specify the parameters of “onset,” “uniqueness of disability,” as well as requiring which accommodations were considered and rejected.

Action: There was consensus from committee members for the chair (Charlene) to respond to the Board’s request for feedback by letter, and to include feedback that which was discussed at the meeting. Charlene will circulate the draft letter to SSEAC members prior to sending it to the state Board of Education.

October 18

Presentation

Overview of Medicaid Waivers – Diana Thorpe, Director of Long Term Care Programs from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance (DMAS) presented information on Virginia's Medicaid waiver procedures and the financing of the program. She explained the state plan rules addressing eligibility, waivers, consumer directed personal care services, and the different types of waivers (AIDS, personal attendant, elderly & disabled, technology assisted, mental retardation/"MR", developmental delay /"DD") covered services, screening process. Frequently asked questions and answers about the DD waiver were provided. Diana provided information on the Informed Choice Project (Real Choice Systems Change federal grant), which will provide a "road map" to services. The road map will list services by categories and where to get information and assistance, including an organizational format for people to use when navigating different systems.

Action: Emily moved and seconded by Stan a motion that was passed for the SSEAC to send a letter to the Board of Education urging them to support any request by DMAS to increase the number of Medicaid waiver slots under current waivers so that local public school divisions can access Medicaid funding to the maximum extent possible.

Business, continued

Committee Discussion on Public Comment - The committee members requested VDOE to notify committee members of follow-up to public comments received by SSEAC.

Subcommittees

Results for Students Subcommittee (assigned members are Emily -chair, David, Kevin, Carmen, Mike, Leslie, Heidi) – Emily facilitated the large group to identify priorities for this subcommittee to address, including:

- Review and provide feedback to the technical assistance document, *Academic Review Systems Approach* being developed by Pat Abrams
- Review final version of CIMP improvement strategies
- Federal Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) cluster, free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, including the LRE continuum
- Special education state improvement plan
- Reading programs, including quality at the elementary level and lack of programs at middle and high school levels
- State monitoring
- Secondary transition

- Curriculum, including SOL participation, results, and remediation

Action: Members will be asked to use the Futures Scanning tools (9-Box, etc.) and/or provide suggestions, to help the committee identify priorities. Mike will email committee members and request their feedback on priorities - - for response to Mike by December 6.

Requested Follow-Up to SSEAC

- Update on monitoring of Fairfax, specifically for children residing in Iliff.
- Action to address public comment.
- Send documents: CIMP final Improvement Plan; *Academic Review Systems Approach* being developed by Pat Abrams

Future Agenda Presentation Items

Requested for January 2003:

1. No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress
2. Alternate Assessment Validity
3. Mediation Update
4. Complaints and Due Process Update
5. Parent Involvement Update – Parent Resource Centers and Local Advisory Committees

Requested for May 2003:

1. No Child Left Behind Update
2. Instructional Support Teams – Don Fleming, Office of Student Services
3. Cultural Competence Technical Assistance – Sandra Ruffin, Office of Monitoring

Subcommittee Meetings

The chair of the Readability subcommittee met with VDOE staff to discuss the project of developing a companion to the state's Procedural Safeguards.